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CORRESPONDENCE.

HUNTING DELLA ROBBIA MONUMENTS IN ITALY.

To the Managing Editor of the American Journal of Archæology :

Dear Sir : Having made a special study of the altarpiece by Andrea Della Robbia in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, my desire was aroused to examine all the glazed terracotta sculptures of the Della Robbia school, which form such an important part of Italian Renaissance sculpture. So I sailed for Italy on the 6th of last May, taking with me a good camera and a sufficient number of celluloid films, knowing beforehand that there were many of these monuments which had never been photographed and were consequently imperfectly known. An investigation of this character, which takes one over the mountains and into the valleys, from one end of Italy to the other, may well be described as a hunting expedition ; and, though requiring severe labor and constant sacrifices, has in it a considerable element of sport. Although Dr. Bode, of Berlin in various writings has shown a more discriminating knowledge of this subject than other writers, nevertheless the work of Cavallucci and Molinier, *Les Della Robbia*, was more useful to me as a guide and starter. They had catalogued as many as 350 of these monuments in Italy, and briefly described them. But their attributions were uncertain. Prof. Cavallucci told me in Florence that unless he had a document in hand indicating the authorship of a monument he felt great hesitation in making attributions. And I could see, the more I studied his work, that he considered it more important to discover documents than to observe monuments. Here then was a great opportunity to see a large series of monuments, to compare them and allow them to tell their own story in regard to their origin. Having with the aid of geographical dictionaries and government maps located these 350 monuments, I made up my mind to see as many of them as possible. This was no easy task, as they were widely distributed and, as I progressed, the number of uncatalogued monuments constantly increased. I can give here but a bare outline of my trip. Starting at Genoa, I went to Massa and Pisa and Lucca ; from Lucca following the valley of the Serchio as far north as Castelnuovo. Here

I found a fine series of unphotographed monuments, and began to learn that works of the same author and period are very likely to be found in neighboring towns, especially when lying along a valley. Similarly, starting from Pracchia above Pistoia I studied another series of unphotographed monuments at Gavinana, Lizano and Cutigliano. These monuments may prove to be of importance in solving the problem of the authorship of the celebrated Pistoian frieze.

At Prato the monuments of this class have been photographed, and are well known. Florence and its immediate surroundings contain the most important works of Luca and of Giovanni Della Robbia, but is very poor in examples of Andrea Della Robbia. Hence the Florentines have a very inadequate notion of Andrea's work, which must be studied at Arezzo, La Verna, Prato, Siena and Viterbo. At Florence I was fortunate enough to find an unpublished document ascribing one of the medallions at Or San Michele to Luca Della Robbia. Two of these medallions by the elder Luca had never been photographed before, but have now been taken by Alinari. So far as I know, the monuments at Impruneta, ten miles from Florence, are unknown to students of this subject. Three of them have been photographed by Brogi, who gives no attributions. They are not mentioned by Cavallucci nor by Dr. Bode; yet they are amongst the very finest works by Luca Della Robbia. In the private collection of the Marquis Frescobaldi I recognized a fine Luca Della Robbia, and in that of the Marquis Antinori an excellent example of Giovanni's work. Less important discoveries made in this region are too numerous to mention. At Empoli, not many miles from Florence, are several uncatalogued monuments and a fine example of a tile pavement, which I identified as Della Robbia work. I then visited Poggibonsi and Volterra and Siena, and satisfied myself that the beautiful coronation of the Virgin at the Osservanza outside Siena is a chef-d'oeuvre of Andrea Della Robbia. From Asciano I visited Monte San Savino, Lucignano and Foiano and took photographs of some fine, unrecognized works of Andrea Della Robbia. Another starting point was Montepulciano for a long drive to Radicofani, a weird Etruscan site, whose churches contained half a dozen unphotographed Della Robbias, then to S. Fiora, whose monuments have a greater reputation than they deserve, to S. Antimo, a fine Cistercian ruin, and Montalcino. At Perugia I photographed the monuments of Benedetto Buglione, thus laying the basis for a study of his works, a number of which may now be identified. In the case of his pupil, Santi Buglione, I was less successful, as the chapel at Croce dell'Alpe, which contained two authenticated altarpieces of his seems to have disappeared, not only

from sight, but from the memory of the inhabitants of the neighborhood. So the reconstruction of his style involves a wider stretch of the scientific imagination. At Acquapendente I found a unique glazed terra-cotta altar signed by Jacopo Benevento, at Bolsena took the first photograph of several monuments, and at Viterbo had photographs made of the important lunettes by Andrea Della Robbia. At Rome I penetrated the mysteries of the Vatican and discovered there a signed monument by Fra Lucas, son of Andrea Della Robbia, and found in the Industrial Museum several monuments, which I identified as by the same author. Hitherto Fra Lucas has been known only as the maker of tile pavements. At Montecassiano there is a large monument concerning which a document has been published in many Italian journals, ascribing the authorship to Fra Mattia Della Robbia. This has been published from a drawing, and my photograph is the first taken from the original monument. On the basis of a very imperfect acquaintance with his style, other monuments are being freely attributed to Fra Mattia. In the Marche there is a series of terracotta altar-pieces attributed to Pietro Paolo Agabiti, a local painter of the xvi century. These attributions are purely hypothetical, and the hypothesis that Fra Mattia might have been their author is now being tested by local archæologists. I travelled over a large portion of this province, seeing some important monuments, but without making discoveries of importance. Umbria in general proved even less fruitful, the terracotta monuments being of poor quality and showing little or no Della Robbia influence.

A very interesting region comprises Città di Castello, Borgo San Sepolcro, Arezzo and the Casentino. Here Andrea Della Robbia left his impress strongly marked, especially in the very beautiful altar-pieces at La Verna. As we approach Florence we find more by Giovanni and his school, especially noteworthy being the monuments at Galatrona and San Giovanni.

When obliged to return home there remained very few known Della Robbia monuments in Italy which I had not visited; almost everywhere I found more than had been already catalogued, and my collection of photographs of these monuments is undoubtedly the most complete in existence. Already considerable knowledge has been gained of the differences of style, which characterized the various members of the school, as I hope to show in a series of articles for the *American Journal of Archæology*. In order to complete this work I shall still have to hunt further in the museums and private collections of Spain, Portugal, France, England, Germany and Austria. There are a few Della Robbia monuments in this country, of which one is in

Princeton, one in New York, one in Newport, R. I., and several in Boston.

Beside the direct pleasures of the chase and the bagging of game, there are many incidental pleasures in such a hunting expedition.

One learns of the whereabouts of other monuments, acquires a knowledge of the country, of the language, of the people and of all the local surroundings that help explain to us the significance of the past.

Yours sincerely,

ALLAN MARQUAND.

Guernsey Hall, Princeton, N. J., Dec. 27, 1892.